

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraphs at page 13, line 1 through page 14, line 5 as follows:

Figure 2 shows a cross-sectional view of a typical raw laser-imageable printing sleeve of the invention, i.e., before the plate is subjected to laser imaging. As seen in Figure 2, the printing sleeve (1) typically is constructed of a sleeve carrier (2) (4), a floor layer (3) (2), a collapsible relief layer (4) (3) and a non-collapsible radiation-curable cap layer (5) (4).

The sleeve carrier or support (2) (4) can be constructed of any material or composite, which provides the desired rigidity and thermal stability. Typically, materials for construction of the sleeve carrier (2) (4) include metals, such as steel, aluminum, and nickel, polymers, and polymer/fiber composites, such as carbon-fiber or fiberglass reinforced resins. Polymeric films, including polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and polystyrene and polyvinyl resins, are also usable as the sleeve carrier of the invention.

On top of the sleeve carrier (2) (4) is a floor layer (3) (2) that provides support to the printing sleeve and is formed from a collapsible or non-collapsible photopolymer composition. The method of creating the floor layer (3) on the sleeve carrier (2) depends on whether the sleeve carrier (2) is transparent or opaque. If a transparent sleeve carrier such as PET is used, the floor layer can be created by back exposure through the sleeve carrier (2). If a more opaque sleeve carrier (2) is used, the floor layer is created by front exposure.

On top of the floor layer (3) (2) are one or more collapsible relief layers (4) (3), formed from a collapsible radiation-curable photopolymer composition. The collapsible curable relief layer(s) (4) (3) of the invention generally comprise (i) a curable elastomer; (ii) a material that absorbs laser light at a selected wavelength; and (iii) expanded or unexpanded microspheres (6).

Finally, the printing sleeve (1) of the invention comprises a non-collapsible radiation-curable cap layer (5) (4) on top of the collapsible relief layer (4) (3) that acts as the printing surface in the final sleeve formulation. This denser non-collapsible layer may have a similar or the same composition as the collapsible layer, but without the addition of the microspheres. The non-collapsible layer (5) may also be similar to or the same as typical cap layers normally

used in conventional capped plates, such as MacDermid's Flexlight® EPIC. Examples of the cap layer are well known in the art and may be found, for example, in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,427,759, 4,460,675, and 5,976,765, the subject matter of which is herein incorporated by reference in their entirety.

Figure 3 shows the printing sleeve (1) of the invention as it is being subjected to an IR laser (8) to collapse the microspheres (6) contained in the collapsible radiation-curable elastomer layer (4) to create the relief image (7) of the printing sleeve(1).

Figure 4 shows the printing sleeve (1) of the invention as it is subjected to radiation-curing and post-curing steps to toughen the printing sleeve for press usage. As discussed above, curing of the elastomer layers is accomplished by thermal curing or radiation curing using radiation source(s) (10). Sources of radiation (10) include UV light and electron beams.